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Opinion

Sias' speech rings true

Over the years, we've heard a succession of State of the University speeches by KSU presidents describe in glowing terms how splendid everything is on campus, how steady progress has been made on all fronts over the past year, how with a little more money from the General Assembly, KSU can and will achieve greatness.

As a rule, we take those speeches very much with a grain of salt.

That's because, especially in recent years, within months of those glowing reports on the state of KSU, the president who made the speech is out the door for whatever reason, the faculty (and/or Board of Regents) is in turmoil or the university's finances are a mess – or all of the above.

We have a feeling, however, that the State of the University speech KSU President Mary Evans Sias made this week as the new school year begins rings fairly true.

Oh, she said all the usual and expected things about challenging students "to open your minds"... "to see the bright future." She even said, "We have a rendezvous with our own destiny."

But more important, she talked about her expectations of Kentucky State 10 years from now: New and renovated buildings full because of a 75 percent freshman retention rate and a 60 percent graduation rate; athletic teams second to none but also choir, band, drama and student government programs top-tier as well.

The university's enrollment is up impressively, although far too many students are not returning because of high tuition costs. Much-needed renovations of campus buildings are in the works. Student scholarship funds amounted to \$1.4 million in the last year.

And Sias has accomplished this without the faculty, staff or student upheavals of past administrations and without bleary-eyed state auditors throwing up their hands in despair of the state of university books.

Yes, Sias is expected to put the best light on the condition of KSU in her speech to students and faculty. For the first time in a long time, however, we expect she was not exaggerating – at least not much.

And that is real progress.